

# House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

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Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

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## House Considers Defense Bill Without Allowing Key Personnel Benefits

*Washington D.C.—Today the House is considering the National Defense Authorization Bill for fiscal year 2006. The Rules Committee did not allow several key personnel amendments to be considered by the full House.*

**Amendment re: WOMEN IN THE MILITARY**

"This legislation is the third attempt by House Republicans to limit the role of women in the military. With each successive proposal, the Republicans have been forced to scale back the restrictions they wish to impose," said **Ranking Member Ike Skelton (MO)**. "The final provision simply requires more detailed reporting if the services want to expand the role of women and establishes a longer waiting period following notice to Congress before those changes can go into effect."

**Rep. Vic Snyder (AR)** remarked, "The issue of women in our military should be considered in a deliberative manner, with hearings and analysis, none of which occurred before these provisions were brought to us. While changing this policy in such a cavalier fashion is disrespectful of our men and women in uniform, at least the majority now recognizes that their previous amendments need to be abandoned."

"Not every man, nor every woman, makes a good soldier. If a woman can do it and wants to do it and she's good at it, then let her do it!" declared **Rep. Loretta Sanchez (CA)**. "We have received no evidence of problems concerning women in our military that would warrant these changes. As I've said before, this isn't a question of equal opportunity. It's a question of national security."

**Amendment re: TRICARE FOR RESERVISTS AND NATIONAL GUARD**

The Taylor amendment would have restored a bipartisan provision from the Armed Services committee to the defense bill ensuring that Reservists and National Guardsmen have access to Tricare, the military health care system.

"This amendment would have restored a provision the Chairman dropped from the bill that was supported by a bipartisan majority of committee members," said **Rep. Gene Taylor (MS)**. "These members felt so strongly about providing Guard and

Reserve personnel the opportunity to purchase TRICARE health coverage that they voted in favor of this proposal over Chairman Hunter's objections."

"We have Reservists and National Guardsmen performing top-notch service in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many of them lack health insurance. To deny them access to health coverage dishonors that service," **Taylor** continued. "Despite the reluctance of the majority, I will continue working to ensure that these men and women understand how much we appreciate the sacrifices they and their families have made."

**Amendment re: CONCURRENT RECEIPT**

The Marshall amendment would allow disabled retirees to receive their full military retired pay and veterans disability payments without a phase-in period.

"It is a gross injustice that the vast majority of disabled military retirees are denied some or all of their disability benefits as a result of the imposition of the Disabled Veterans Tax," commented **Rep. Jim Marshall (GA)**. "My amendment would have allowed an up or down vote on the question of whether this country should end, once and for all, its tax on disabled veterans. It is unconscionable that the Rules Committee refused to grant an up or down vote on such a clear moral and patriotic issue."

"Our veterans and military retirees deserve to receive the full range of benefits they have earned in service to this nation. By not allowing this legislation to be considered on the floor, the majority has taken a position against the men and women who have been seriously injured while fighting for our nation. They sacrificed so much for us and the least we can do is provide them with the full benefits they earned in doing so," said **Rep. Silvestre Reyes (TX)**.

**Amendment re: SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN**

Rep. Salazar offered an amendment that would have allowed eligible beneficiaries to receive both Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments and annuity payments from the Survivor Benefit Plan without facing offsets.

"I am disappointed that the majority would not allow this provision to be debated in the House. While our servicemen and women are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, their families need the reassurance that in the event the unthinkable should happen, they will be taken care of," commented **Rep. Solomon Ortiz (TX)**.

"This amendment would have given military families a small peace of mind in allowing them to receive the full benefit available if something should happen to their loved one," said **Rep. Martin Meehan (MA)**. "It is unfortunate that politics would trump the well-being of our servicemembers and their families."

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